



U.S. Department of Agriculture

Personnel Security Bulletin #02-02

Subject: Requests for Personnel Security Information By Subjects

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Subject: Requests for Personnel Security Information By Subjects

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
For Administration

Issue: Individual subjects are contacting Departmental Administration (DA) directly and requesting the status of their background investigation. DA believes that the release of this information should be controlled by the subject's agency or staff office.

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Planning and
Management
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Date Issued: September 1, 2002

Effective Date: October 1, 2002

Scope and Effect: This is an internal advisory document for use by USDA personnel involved in implementing USDA's personnel security program

Supersession: This Bulletin does not supercede any previous guidance issued.

New Procedure: Therefore effective October 1, 2002, DA will no longer provide information to individual subjects on the status of their background investigations. Subjects will be referred to their agency or staff office personnel security point-of-contact. Each agency and staff office is free to devise their own internal policy as to whether and how they will release this information to their employees and contractors. To facilitate access to personnel security information, agencies and staff offices are reminded that they are entitled to access, on a need-to-know basis, to both the SETS and PSAT databases. DA can grant access to both databases

Except to this Procedure: An exception to this policy is that DA will continue to respond to inquiries from individuals in the Office of Secretary.

Background: Presently, DA routinely responds to inquiries from subjects on the status of their background investigations. In the past this was necessary because agencies and staff offices did not have access to automated databases to provide this information to their employees and contractors. In addition, in the past, the accuracy of data was questionable.

DA has made great strides in improving the accuracy and availability of data concerning personnel security of USDA employees and contractors. As a result, two databases are now available to USDA agencies and staff offices that include accurate up-to-date information on the status of personnel security information on individual subjects.

The National Finance Center (NFC) maintains the Security Entry and Tracking System (SETS) for DA. SETS is the database of record for both determinations of suitability for federal employment and security clearances. SETS data is now regularly transmitted to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management for inclusion in the Central Verification System (CVS). In accordance with Office of Management and Budget Bulletin #02-03, effective January 31, 2003, the CVS will become the government-wide database of record for security clearances for all federal employees and contractors. USDA agencies and staff offices have and continue to have "need-to-know" access to SETS.

The Office of Crisis Planning and Management's (OCPM) Personnel Security Division maintains the Personnel Security Action Tracking (PSAT) database. This Microsoft Access® database contains accurate real-time information on the status of background investigations that are in process. In April 2002, OCPM granted access to the PSAT database to personnel security points-of-contact that were selected by the respective human resource managers from agencies and staff offices. The database resides on a DA server and agency and staff offices' information technology staff must provide connectivity to this database. Once connectivity is achieved, authorized persons can access data on their employees and contractors and determine on a real time basis, the status of ongoing investigations.

Further Information: For further information, please contact OCPM's Personnel Security Division at 202 720-7373.
